

# THE AUSTRALIAN BUSINESS REVIEW

Tuesday, March 12, 2024 | Today's Paper | Mind Games

**ROBERT GOTTLIEBSEN**

## The Albanese government is hiding many dark environmental secrets



---

By **ROBERT GOTTLIEBSEN**  
BUSINESS COLUMNIST

10:58AM MARCH 12, 2024 •  11 COMMENTS

The Albanese government is embracing some of the worst practices of dictator-driven governments to conceal controversial environmental measures. The secrecy may be necessary because the measures curb mining in Australia, hit many property developments, restrict solar farms and hurt farmers.

I emphasise this commentary is not about the detail of what is planned — I don't know the detail. My contribution is to reveal the extraordinary third world practices being embraced by Anthony Albanese to conceal what is planned so it can be rushed through the parliament.

I fear the designers have no regard to the revenue implications of what they plan. Their title “The Nature Positive Plan” looks to be in the tradition of George Orwell's Animal Farm.

The secrecy measures are nothing short of extraordinary and are equally dangerous as those used by former PM Scott Morrison to conceal the fact he was taking on extra ministries.

I set out below how the truth behind “The Nature Positive Plan” is being concealed.

Representatives from leading companies and other interested parties are invited to go into a room to look at parts — not all — of the draft legislation.

But before they are allowed to enter the room, they must sign a voluminous confidentiality agreement preventing them from discussing both their entry into the room and the contents of the draft legislation they are about to be shown. I do not know the exact penalties for breaching that agreement, but the fines will be heavy and jail a possibility.

Once the agreement is signed, those allowed to enter the room are told they must not photograph any of the draft legislation on the table and cannot take it away. They are given a fixed time to take notes using blank paper and a pen.

There is some discussion allowed about the draft, but I don't know the details. The participants are allowed to take their notes away with them. Nothing else.

I don't know the people who were invited but almost certainly some will be international companies who later (illegally) will report back to international boards, including those in the US (our defence partner), this is a country where very strange practices are taking place.

To overseas eyes used to third world countries, it must reek of corruption, but I don't think money-based corruption is taking place. It's all about extreme left wing agendas.

As I understand it, there have been several of these bizarre events. Only a government with something very dangerous to conceal would embrace this sort of tactic.

It is publicly known the Albanese government is planning a new tranche of legislation to replace the current Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.

The EPBC Act was a carefully prepared document. The states and federal governments set the framework and then industry groups, individual companies, environmental groups, scientists, conservationists, subject-matter experts, and the general community were consulted extensively.

The EPBC Act was developed over years before the federal government published a discussion paper, then an exposure draft, to get detailed feedback on the entire suite of changes.

The Albanese government thinks it can replace this substantial, 1,100-page legislation (plus hundreds of further pages of subsidiary legislation) in short time.

Australia as a nation spends its mining, agriculture and property revenue by providing very high levels of social services. Jim Chalmers, in recognition of this revenue source, has taken steps to make mining approvals smoother.

But, I suspect the treasurer does not know exactly what is being planned. You will remember he advocated pensioners use the gig economy to gain the extra income he was allowing them to earn without impacting pension entitlements.

He didn't know the industrial relations legislation was going to hit the gig economy hard.

It is understandable an ALP government would seek to upgrade the environmental rules set down in the 1990s. But the right way to go about it is to bring the community together with wide consultation — just as was done in the 1990s.

I am told one version of the environmental secrecy technique was used before the industrial relations bill was put on the parliamentary table. [The industrial relations](#)

[blueprint was a total mess](#) and will [endanger our economy](#). And its “loopholes” title was also in the Orwell tradition.

**ROBERT GOTTLIEBSEN, BUSINESS COLUMNIST**

Robert GottliebSEN has spent more than 50 years writing and commentating about business and investment in Australia. He has won the Walkley award and Australian Journalist of the Year award. He has a place in the A... [Read more](#)

---

